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sary to pass six acts against industrial and agrarian rioting. This movement for reform later became known as Chartism, and, in spite of the Reform Bill of 1832, lasted down into the fifties. Peacock saw the struggle seething within; and, to him, the great English institutions seemed to have become a mockery: he might have written a philosophy of clothes, had his temperament been such; instead, he has left us a series of argumentative house-parties for which he is not without honor. But Peacock's is not an indictment of society merely, but of humanity, not merely of this or that class, but of the individuals that make up every class: for him, human-nature is gone wrong.

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SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

I. SHAKESPEARE'S SUPPOSED REFERENCES TO HIS MARRIAGE

At the close of November, 1582, or a few days later, William Shakespeare, then eighteen years of age, married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years his senior. Nearly six months later, on May 26, 1583, their first child Susanna was baptized.

The dramatist has been thought to have in mind the disparity in the ages of himself and wife when writing a passage in *Twelfth Night*.

Duke. My life upon't, young though thou art, thine eye
Hath stay'd upon some favour that it loves.
Hath it not, boy?

Viola. A little, by your favour.

Duke. What kind of woman is't?

Viola. Of your complexion.

Duke. She is not worth thee, then. What years, i'faith?

Viola. About your years, my lord.

Duke. Too old, by heaven. Let still the woman take
An elder than herself; so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are.

Viola. I think it well, my lord.

Duke. Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affections cannot hold the bent.

For women are as roses, whose fair flower
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour.

Viola. And so they are; alas, that they are so!

To die, even when they to perfection grow!

(II, iv, 24-42.)

Malone, Coleridge, White, and Sir Sidney Lee are among those who feel confident that this passage contains an autobiographical reference, "an appeal to the lessons of his personal experience." Furness opposes this view, and then insists on debating in these words the general question involved:

Not only do I not believe that Shakespeare was here referring to his own experience, but I do not believe that Orsino's assertion itself is true. The record of marriages where the woman is the elder will prove, I think, that, *as a rule*, such unions, founded as they are, not on the fleeting attractions of youth, which is 'a stuff will not endure,' but on the abiding elements of intellectual congeniality, have been unusually happy.¹

Though Shakespeare's own experience may well have contributed to the specific quality and the marked intensity of these lines, there is no need of going beyond the situation itself for a justification of all that is said.

In the opening scene of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* Lysander declares that "the course of true love never did run smooth," and gives as one reason for this that love is sometimes "misgraffed in respect of years." These words necessarily bring to mind the marked disparity between the ages of Anne Hathaway and her boy-husband.

Professor John M. Manly points out that "tradition and the known facts of Shakespeare's marriage attest a wild youth, such as the old shepherd describes in *The Winter's Tale*: 'I would there were no age between ten [emended to sixteen in Globe ed. to nineteen by Manly] and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancients, stealing, fighting—[*Horns*.] Hark you now! Would any but these boiled brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather?" [III, iii, 59-65.] As the

¹ Variorum edition of *Twelfth Night*, p. 140.

passage is totally unwarranted by dramatic purpose, it is strongly suggestive of personal reminiscence."²

It is strange that no commentator cited by Furness pays any attention to the possibility that a passage in *The Tempest* may contain a reference to Shakespeare's own marriage. Near the beginning of Act IV, Prospero gives Miranda to Ferdinand with these words:

Then, as my gift and thine own acquisition
 Worthily purchas'd, take my daughter. But
 If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
 All sanctimonious ceremonies may
 With full and holy rite be minist'red,
 No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
 To make this contract grow; but barren Hate,
 Sour-eyed Disdain and Discord shall bestrew
 The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
 That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed,
 As Hymen's lamps shall light you.
Ferdinand. As I hope
 For quiet days, fair issue, and long life,
 With such love as 'tis now, the murkiest den,
 The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestio
 Our worser genius can, shall never melt
 Mine honour into lust, to take away
 The edge of that day's celebration
 When I shall think or Phoebus' steeds are founde'r'd
 Or Night kept chain'd below.

(IV, i, 13-31.)

Were these words called out by Shakespeare's bitter memory of the immorality which preceded and forced on his own marriage? It seems probable that they were. I have always felt them to be distinctly inappropriate here. The whole tone of this portion of the play has been idyllic and charming. The love that we have seen spring up between Ferdinand and Miranda has been as pure as it has been frank and natural. Suddenly this intense and bitter admonition breaks the charm. Prospero, who has been universally recognized as at times a mouthpiece of Shakespeare, voices a warning which thrills with a poignance and intensity that are dramatically uncalled for. I feel that Prospero, under the influence of the familiar situation, suddenly becomes Shakespeare, recalling his

² "Shakespeare Himself," 25. In *A Memorial Volume to Shakespeare and Harvey*, The Univ. of Texas, 1916.

own wrong-doing and its evil consequences. The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob.

II. THE CHOOSING OF THE CASKETS

The skill with which Shakespeare has woven together the two main stories of *The Merchant of Venice*, that of the bond and that of the caskets, strikes even the casual reader. Although the bond story has the more intense interest, and the choice of the caskets seems at first sight little more than a fairy tale, yet the latter story speedily discloses striking dramatic qualities. The three successive scenes of choosing are easily made spectacular in presentation. In each there is a prolonged and fateful suspense. The choice of the leaden casket by Bassanio is a telling climax to the series.

Professor R. G. Moulton says:

The point of the Caskets Story to the eye of an artist in Drama is the opportunity it affords for . . . an idealisation of the commonest problem in everyday experience—what may be called the Problem of Judgment by Appearances.

We have clearly [in the choice of the Caskets] the Problem of Judgment by Appearances drawn out in its ideal form; and our sympathies are attracted by the sight of a process, belonging to our everyday experience, yet developed before us in all the force artistic setting can bestow.¹

But it is not only the external appearance of the caskets to which attention is called. Each bears also a challenging inscription. The one of gold declares:

Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.

The casket of silver tells us:

Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.

The leaden casket carries the threat:

Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.

The Prince of Morocco dwells upon the motto on the golden casket, and considers Portia to be "what many men desire" (II, vii). Like Sir Willoughby in *The Egoist*, Morocco is eager to carry

¹ *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, 3d ed., Oxford, 1893, pp. 52, 54.

off the prize for which many are contending. He also considers gold the appropriate metal to contain Portia's picture:

Never so rich a gem
Was set in worse than gold.

It is only this second thought that is a judgment by appearances.

The choice of the Prince of Arragon (II, ix.) cannot be called a judgment by appearances at all. Silver is an unobtrusive middle term between much-promising gold and meagre, unpromising lead. Arragon is entirely concerned with the different inscriptions. His self-satisfied spirit is attracted by the sentiment upon the silver casket:

Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.

His decision is:

I will assume desert. Give me a key for this.

When Bassanio faces the choice (III, ii.), his first reflections are wholly concerned with the danger of judging according to appearances. Is he not led into this line of thought by the song which Portia orders to be sung, according to the early texts, "*whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself*"? He says:

So may the outward shows be least themselves;
The world is still deceiv'd with ornament.

But the only principle which his words suggest, as an alternative to judging by appearances, is the still more childish one of judging contrary to appearances. He rejects the "gaudy gold," fearing to be "deceiv'd with ornament." He then puts aside the silver mean between the two extremes, giving as the reason simply that silver is the "pale and common drudge 'Tween man and man." In contrast to Morocco and Arragon, Bassanio pays no attention whatever to the inscriptions upon these two caskets. When he turns to the leaden casket, however, there is an allusion to the inscription:

But thou, thou meagre lead,
Which rather threat'nest than dost promise aught,
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence;
And here choose I. Joy be the consequence!

Except for this brief reference, Bassanio pays no attention to the threatening words upon the casket of lead. Paleness, which made the silver casket unattractive, has strangely become a charm in the

leaden. The apparent reason for his choice is that he is glad, as an ardent lover, to hazard all for love.

The question arises whether Shakespeare would not have given to this scene an added significance, a finer reasonableness, if he had made Bassanio pay more attention to the different mottoes, and definitely prefer the sentiment upon the chosen casket. The man who makes choice of the inscription, "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath," is to win the hand of Portia. These words represent the essential, inevitable law of marriage. It is wholly true in this case also, although a penniless gentleman is to wed a wealthy heiress. Marriage is the great venture of life, inherently and necessarily. Only he who knows that he is giving and hazarding all he hath is fitted to marry. If this truth were realized, there might be fewer marriages; there would certainly be fewer divorces.

What an opportunity Shakespeare made for himself here to set forth the essential nature of true marriage! Why does he fail to use this opportunity? Early in his career, in the relations between Antipholus of Ephesus and his wife Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors*, he illustrated the friction and misunderstandings that can disturb married life even when neither person is very plainly at fault. Why then does he put us off here with the cheap moral that man should judge contrary to appearances?

It is not probable that the modern reader sees an opportunity here which Shakespeare failed to discern. It may well be that the whole tone and temper of *The Merchant of Venice* is so idealizing, so romantic, that any realistic grappling with the nature and the dangers of the marriage relation was felt to be out of keeping with the spirit of the play. As in so many of the comedies, every possibility of discord or misunderstanding is supposed to vanish with the sound of marriage bells. Shakespeare has been satisfied to set forth here a very shallow truth, although in the challenging words upon the leaden casket a trenchant, fateful life-lesson was staring him in the face.

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